

## **To California Air Resources Board**

### **From Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities**

Dear members of the California Air Resources Board,

Indigenous peoples, traditional communities and other forest-dependent communities are important partners in the fight to slow climate change. Indigenous peoples and local communities own or have designated use rights to approximately 18% of the world's tropical forests and maintain 20% of the total above ground carbon stored in the world's major tropical forest regions (Indonesia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mesoamerica, Amazon Basin). Through their regulation of global climate, these "forest guardians" provide benefits to Californians.

Subnational governments have increasingly recognized the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in realizing commitments to halt deforestation. In 2014, members of the Governors' Climate and Forests (GCF) Task Force signed the Rio Branco Declaration, committing themselves to reduce deforestation by 80% by 2020 and to sharing the benefits from these efforts with indigenous peoples and local communities. This unique network of 38 subnational governments encompasses over one-third of the world's tropical forests.

We, the Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, are a global alliance comprised of GCF Taskforce<sup>1</sup> members, tribal governments, indigenous peoples and local communities' organizations and civil society<sup>2</sup>. The Global Committee was formed in 2016 with the overarching goal of strengthening partnerships between subnational governments and indigenous peoples and local communities to help move the Rio Branco Declaration from pledge into practice. This global movement has sparked and facilitated regional dialogues between subnational governments and forest-based communities in tropical forests regions to determine best practices for climate change mitigation that advancing rights recognition, livelihoods, finance mechanisms for forest conservation and self-determination of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Two months ago, during the GCF Task Force annual meeting, we presented a landmark set of Principles for Collaboration and Partnership between Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to the GCF Task Force Members, which were then endorsed by 35 members of the GCF Task Force. The Principles for Collaboration and Partnerships (annexed below and available via the [GCF Task Force website](#)) establish that partnerships between GCF Task Force member jurisdictions, indigenous peoples and local communities should: 1) advance rights recognition, 2) promote participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making, 3) commit to the co-design of benefit-sharing and appropriate finance mechanisms, among other guidelines (for the full list of 13 Principles, click the links above or see the annex below).

We congratulate California Air Resources Board for the development of a Tropical Forest Standard as part of the state's globally recognized leadership in climate change mitigation. Further, we recognize the state of California's investment in research and analysis, as well as in a public consultation process in

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.Gcftaskforce.org](http://www.Gcftaskforce.org)

<sup>2</sup> <https://earthinnovation.org/publications/the-governors-climate-and-forests-task-force-global-committee-for-indigenous-peoples-local-communities/>



California to ensure that the Tropical Forest Standard adheres to international frameworks and sets the highest bar possible for any linkage between California and tropical forest jurisdictions.

**By means of this letter, the Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities respectfully submits its recommendation to the CARB to include the GCF Task Force Principles of Collaboration and Partnerships between Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as part of its criteria for stakeholder engagement and to substantiate participatory process requirements referenced in Chapters 3 and 10.**

Because the Principles explicitly focus on the relationship between subnational governments and forest-dependent communities, they are a key resource for informing the criteria for public participatory processes, stakeholder engagement and social safeguards within California's Tropical Forest Standard.

Further, their inclusion would be an important advance towards upholding and strengthening universal tenets for partnerships between local governments and indigenous peoples and local communities based on rights recognition, effective participation, support for livelihoods and benefit-sharing codified in existing commitments such as UNDRIP, Cancun Safeguards and the Rio Branco Declaration. Setting the bar high for partnerships, whether they apply for market-based mechanisms, such as forestry offsets, or a range of other types of existing or potential partnerships, would strengthen the application of the Principles within tropical forest jurisdictions, supporting the key role of indigenous peoples and local communities as forest guardians.

We look forward to contributing in-person during the public hearing of the California Air Resources Board on November 15-16.

Thank you for your consideration,



Magaly Medeiros

Member of the Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities of the Governors' Task Force on Climate and Forests.

---



Guiding Principles for Collaboration and Partnership  
Between Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

GCF Task Force states and provinces recognize that indigenous peoples and local, forest-based communities often lead the way in building and maintaining successful, territorial approaches to forest conservation and low- emissions development. For their part, indigenous and local community leaders recognize that working with governments at all levels is critical in their efforts to secure territorial and human rights and benefits for their communities from their forest conservation and low emissions development leadership. The members of the GCF Task Force and indigenous peoples and local community leaders endorse the following Principles of Collaboration:

1. We recognize and respect indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights in relation to their lands, territories, culture, self-determination and governance as expressed, for example, in Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the New York Declaration on Forests, the Paris Accord, and other international agreements;
2. We recognize the historic contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities to the maintenance of forest stocks and the environmental services those forests provide to society as a whole, through the traditional management of resources, such as community forest management, as well as modern territorial management strategies;
3. We acknowledge, value and support the intrinsic relationship that indigenous and other local forest communities have to their territories and natural environments, which are the main sources for the long-term wellbeing of their people and integrity of their cultures;
4. We intend to facilitate and strengthen indigenous peoples and local communities with regards to territorial governance, forest conservation and management, the preservation of and respect for their traditional knowledge and worldviews, including concepts such as "buen vivir," implementation of life plans, and support for traditional livelihoods that promote integrated forest conservation and community development;
5. We intend to contribute to the broader GCF objective of creating, monitoring and evaluating adaptable, context-specific subnational jurisdictional approaches to forest governance, avoided deforestation, livelihood development, and achievement of Nationally Determined Contributions in their respective countries, with a focus on respect for indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights;
6. We intend to facilitate and support partnerships between subnational governments and representative indigenous peoples and local community authorities, who by definition are those who represent groups that have jurisdiction over a defined territory and vision for management of that territory;

7. We promote, strengthen and guarantee the participation of and representation of indigenous peoples' and local communities' authorities and representative organizations in decision-making processes related to jurisdictional strategies for low emissions rural development and reducing deforestation and degradation;
8. We advocate for subnational, "bottom-up" leadership in national policies for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation and low emissions rural development that affect indigenous peoples and local communities and environmental governance in GCF member states and provinces;
9. We respect and ensure consistency with the Cancún Safeguards, including Free, Prior and Informed Consent (as specified in UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169) for the consultation of indigenous peoples and local communities;
10. As stipulated in the Rio Branco Declaration, we affirm that benefits originating from subnational low emissions rural development and reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation initiatives should flow to indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as other actors contributing to reducing emissions from deforestation, recognizing their contribution to forest conservation;
11. We will work to co-design initiatives and pathways for benefit-sharing, increased financing mechanisms, capacity building, and consultation through the Global GCF Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Working Group as well as through working groups in GCF member regions, if applicable;
12. We commit to facilitate and encourage the design and implementation of finance mechanisms by indigenous peoples and local communities through their representative authorities and organizations; and
13. We commit to promoting measures to ensure protections for the defense of forests by indigenous peoples and local communities.